A Research Proposal

on

Study on Dimensions of Consumer Trust for Online Tourism companies in India

Submitted to

LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.) IN (Management)

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1. Introduction

Tourism as an industry; has a wide scope in our economy. Travel and tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. Out of 181 countries, India's travel and tourism industry secured 5th rank in growth prospects and 14th rank in considering the size of the industry. WTTC, 2011 research confirms the recovery in Travel & Tourism in 2010, with the industry's direct contribution to global GDP increasing by 3.3% directly contributing 1.9% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the year 2011and the recovery is forecast to strengthen further by 4.5% creating an additional 3 million direct industry jobs. Taking into account its wider economic impacts, Travel & Tourism's total economic contribution in the year 2011 is expected to account for 9.1% of global GDP and 258 million jobs.

1.1. Travel and Tourism Industry in India: Statistics

In India, ***Leisure travel spending*** (inbound and domestic) ***generated 73.8%*** of direct Travel and Tourism GDP in 2011 as compared to business travel spending whose contribution is 26.2%. The same are expected to rise by 7.6% pa in 2022 for both leisure and business travel spending. ***Domestic travel spending has also generated almost 5 times more revenue that international tourism receipts.*** The breakdown of indirect contribution from travel and tourism industry is categorized into: Supply Chain (44.8%), Investment (7.3%) and Government Collective (1.5%) with a total collection of 53.7% of the total contribution (WTTC, 2012).

1.2 Digital Revolution: Internet & Tourism Industry (e-tourism)

Internet has brought about a revolution in every sphere of life. It has given business (whether big or small) an equal opportunity to expand by reaching out to a wide range of customers throughout the world. By increasing this world wide exposure, it has raised the competitiveness of the firms who have become more creative and competitive in providing new and better services to the customers. Be it a manufacturing sector or service sector; Information & Communication Technology (ICT) is getting key component of every industry and Tourism Industry is not an exception to it. E-Tourism describes a new way of doing business. It communicates faster and access global markets with minimal costs for new businesses.

Buhalis (2003) suggests that e-tourism reflects the digitization of all processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality and catering industries. At the tactical level, it includes e-commerce and applies ICTs for maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the tourism organization.

The growing number of Internet users that want to obtain tourism-related information and the growing demand for new travel experiences has opened huge opportunities for developing countries. ICTs also help destinations and national tourism providers to develop, manage and sell their offerings worldwide. The reorganization of the tourism market together with effective use of ICTs could allow developing countries to build their own brand images, develop new products, promote their tourism resources and expand their customer base to ultimately increase tourism foreign earnings and contribute to local development (UNCTAD, 2005).

Growth in online travel is noted world-wide with online travel sales doubling in the U.S., Europe and Asia. As consumers continue to use the web for travel and hospitality resources, there is a need to examine the business-to-consumer online environment and the issues facing the continued acceptance and use of web by the consumers. Even the inclination of tourism industry is towards the understanding of the customer needs, preferences and behavior, like all industries.

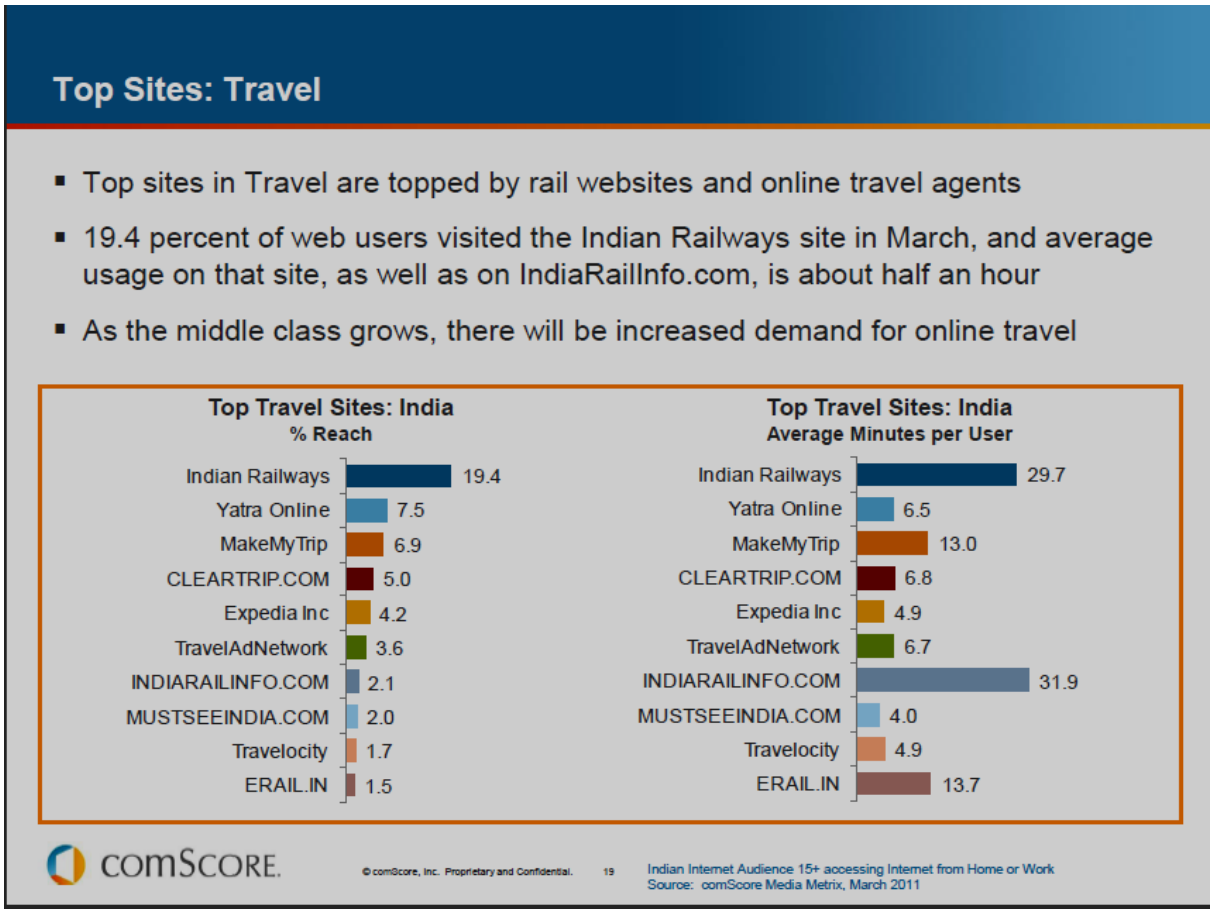
E-Tourism is a blooming sector. Most of the tourism companies are involved in developing their internet services for generating more business and hence revenues. It has also widened the scope for business expansion in all geographical, marketing and operational senses. E-tourism companies can now be considered as powerful ***'travel supermarkets'*** as they provide integrated travel solutions and a whole range of value added services. Role of traditional tour operators is being threatened by the dynamic packaging of new online entrants in tourism industry.

What product/services do you intend to purchase online in the next 6 months?		
Base: All respondents	APAC	IN
Books	52%	41%
Music (not downloaded)	17%	21%
Videos/DVDs/Games (not downloaded)	16%	22%
Clothing/Accessories/Shoes	44%	25%
Cosmetics/nutrition supplies	30%	14%
Electronic equipment (TV/Camera etc.)	32%	36%
Toys/Dolls	14%	10%
Computer Hardware	21%	24%
Computer Software (not downloaded)	12%	21%
Airline ticket/reservations	35%	40%
Tours/Hotel Reservations	30%	29%
Automobiles & Parts	7%	12%
Event Tickets	18%	26%
Sporting Goods	17%	12%
Sports Memorabilia	8%	5%
Groceries	27%	18%

Source: Neilson Report on Online shopping trends in India (September 20, 2010)

According to the survey, conducted by Neilson, about 40% of the Indians are most likely to buy airline tickets and reservations online; which is the second highest option in the minds of Indians in terms of online purchasing as well as 29% of the Indians opt to plan for online Tours/ Hotel reservations. With the increasing level of consumer confidence, online travel industry has seen rising stocks and improved conditions for air and hotel suppliers in the industry's ecosystem (Juman, 2012).

Reports from Phocuswright reveal that despite of many odd factors (like slow economy, rising fuel prices and a troubled aviation sector); India's travel marketplace is expanding rapidly, and is poised for strong double-digit growth for the next several years. The total travel market advanced 14% in 2011, and will continue to expand at a similar pace. The country's upwardly mobile middle class is growing, they are increasingly tech-savvy, and they have a strong appetite for travel. ***"A new breed of traveler is emerging from India – more independent, affluent, technology savvy and hungry for travel,"*** *as stated by Douglas Quinby, senior director, research at PhoCusWright*. "Even amid a decelerating economic climate for the country, India's expanding traveler class is fueling rapid growth in the total travel market and increasingly eager to embrace online travel planning and booking tools."


Top Sites: Travel
Top sites in Travel are topped by rail websites and online travel agents
19.4 percent of web users visited the Indian Railways site in March, and average usage on that site, as well as on IndiaRailInfo.com, is about half an hour
As the middle class grows, there will be increased demand for online travel
Top Travel Sites: India
% Reach
Indian Railways 19.4
Yatra Online 7.5
MakeMyTrip 6.9
CLEARTRIP.COM 5.0
Expedia Inc 4.2
TravelAdNetwork 3.6
INDIARAILINFO.COM 2.1
MUSTSEEINDIA.COM 2.0
Travelocity 1.7
ERAIL.IN 1.5
Top Travel Sites: India
Average Minutes per User
Indian Railways 29.7
Yatra Online 6.5
MakeMyTrip 13.0
CLEARTRIP.COM 6.8
Expedia Inc 4.9
TravelAdNetwork 6.7
INDIARAILINFO.COM 31.9
MUSTSEEINDIA.COM 4.0
Travelocity 4.9
ERAIL.IN 13.7
comScore
© comScore, Inc. Proprietary and Confidential. 19
Indian Internet Audience 15+ accessing Internet from Home or Work
Source: comScore Media Metrix, March 2011

Source: State of the Internet In India - June 2011 - A Report by ComScore (June 8, 2011)

A report by Shrey Gandhi (comscore), provided insights into the analysis of top online activities such as buying behavior, web search, online travel, social networking and more across India with comparison to Bric countries, US, Japan and European Nations. Also, it gives insights into the top online brands across different sectors. Growth rate of travel in India is 13%. Indian railways top the chart in online travel sites with 19.4% users. Other websites which follow it are Yatra online (7.5%), Make my Trip (6.9%) and Cleartrip (5%).

In order to stay ahead in the highly competitive industry, marketers require a deep understanding of the digital landscape and rich insights into consumers' online research and booking activity in this sector (comscore). The result is that it leads to the selection of proper supply components and benefits that suit different market segments. Tourist behavior studies in the field of travel and tourism have examined the relationship between satisfaction level and online bookings. However, no study has looked at the ***factors influencing trust in Indian consumers using e-tourism websites.***

1.3 Consumer trust & e-tourism

Tourism and leisure activities are becoming more and more important in the people's life. So, e-tourism companies need to focus on how to attract and simultaneously retain more and more tourists. Tourist relationship management is a crucial subject which firms take special attention to, which directly or indirectly results in Tourist satisfaction, Tourist loyalty and finally Tourist retention. If a company wants to satisfy its customer, it should first investigate factors which affect their satisfaction levels. Hence, it needs to answer how to win consumer trust.

Trust in the internet store is a consumer's willingness to rely on the seller and take action. Hence, trust is an important element which affects the consumers' purchasing decision. And, there is a scarcity of research on trust in consumer marketing. Trust is a social lubricant that allows consumers to transact with merchants who are not part of their immediate network. Moreover, it mitigates the consumer's perception of the risks involved in a purchase situation. The higher the initial perceptions of risk, the higher the trust needed to facilitate the transaction (Mayer et al., 1995).

In marketing, trust has been empirically tested as a key factor in the initiation, development and maintenance of any long-term relationship. Trust leads to customer loyalty and commitment. Building a group of loyal customers is money in a bank for a hotel, but loyalty requires a long-term relationship in which a hotel earns its guests' trust (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998).

It also encourages cooperation and agreement while having the ability to increase the persuasive power of a company in a transaction, since a trusting consumer is less price-sensitive.

Despite the increasing number of internet users and forecasting the future prospects of online travel industry, practitioners have encountered problems and challenges, including how to win consumer trust. There are no statistics showing the exact number of travelers who have purchased travel-related products online. It is apparent that not all online users make their purchases online. There is a quick need for finding as to what are the concerns that prohibit/ restrict online users from purchasing online.

The unwillingness of consumers to plan tours online crops up due to certain fears and uncertainties which can be categorized as:

- Legitimacy and authentication of website
- Product Quality
- System Security and Information privacy
- Post-purchase service

This research work has been undertaken with an objective of an in-depth analysis of reasons for low level of trust for tourism websites and simultaneously ways to remove those barriers which act as a hindrance for online travel commitments. ***Trust is one such important variable which not only initiates one-time exchange relationship rather, will help in establishing a long-lasting relationship with consumers.*** Analysis of factors affecting consumer trust will help in providing solution of winning consumer trust and thereby increasing the number of online travel bookers.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Although customers wish that all their needs would be satisfied at once, but marketers must understand the needs as well as most importantly their priorities. This research study will analyze the ***factors that contribute to trust of Indian tourists in e-tourism companies*** in order to create more value for the customers. Trust-Building process of tourists will be investigated by three aspects namely: ***Consumer Characteristics, Website Characteristics and Service Quality***. An in-depth analysis and knowledge of customers (tourists) will help in this industry to understand its tourists.

2. Literature Review

For many countries tourism has become an important source of business activity, income, employment, and foreign exchange (Habor, 1998). Different aspects of tourism have been researched up to now. Nedelea and Balan (2010) pinpointed that electronic tourism has helped the firms to present their products to a wide range of potential tourists nationally as well as internationally. They raised some important issues like e-procurement of tourism packages, responsibilities of owners' sites and current policy on consumer protection for online travel services. They indicated in their study that electronic tourism has the potential to overcome many problems associated with traditional practices.

What is followed is a brief of some related researches which is available in the literature.

2.1 Importance of e-Tourism

Oorni and Klein (2003) undertook two experiments to compare consumer search behavior electronically and through conventional markets in travel and tourism industry. They examined the effect of Internet-based electronic markets on consumer search in travel and tourism industry. They pinpointed that same forces promote consumer search in conventional markets act in electronic markets as well. They further elaborated that locating prospective sellers and suitable products in electronic travel markets seems to be more difficult than has been previously believed. Although the information can be gathered quickly, provided the relevant information sources are identified. Identification of prospective sellers with suitable offerings on internet seems to be less efficient than previously expected. They identified barriers to search and the topmost barrier to search as rated by the respondents was *unavailability of Information, difficult to locate the prospective sellers, frustration due to technical errors as well as flaws in the site design.*

Sahadev and Islam (2005) highlighted that the use of internet for the purpose of communicating and transacting with customers has been growing rapidly in the worldwide tourism industry. Moreover, the internet usage also varies across countries, even within a country there are large variations among different enterprises.

Tejada and Linan (2009) in their study explored the major global factors that have an impact on the forces of demand and supply of the *tourism industry*. They enlisted Internet and

decreased cost of air travel in affecting the supply side of this industry. And on the other hand, increasing income, changing lifestyles and development of newer tourist sites have been evaluated as factors leading to higher demand. They concluded that tourism industry is facing many new challenges in the form of intense competition and increasing costs. The same can be resolved only if the entire value chain is restructured and the service package is of good quality with much more value.

Qirici, Theodhori and Elmazi (2011) indicated the importance of information technology in context of changing consumer needs and thereby corresponding by delivering appropriate products to the targeted segments. Internet enabled tourism businesses to improve their flexibility, interactivity, efficiency and competitiveness. A key issue for all tourism business is how to evolve their companies from old economy to a new one. They pinpointed that it should be implemented in a manner to create value.

Daghfous and Barkhi (2009) concluded that IT applications in the hotel industry, which have been largely devoted to the handling of routine operational problems, has contributed much in the form of service excellence and high profits.

Morrison et al. (2001) in his research study developed and tested predictive models for the likelihood of booking travel online and for being a repeat booker of travel online. In the year 1999, the number of Americans, who booked travel online, increased by more than 80%. He distinguished the internet travelers into lookers and non-lookers. After finalizing travel plans, some lookers turn into bookers while the rest are offline bookers. Most of the bookers, reserve either travel tickets or a combination of the same with hotels. Only, once they are comfortable they plan for other services as well.

2.2 Consumer Perception: Importance

Bajs (2011) propounded that perception of value is governed not only by perceived quality and costs but also by the product and service attributes. And, from among a whole set of different attributes, customer evaluates only a few of them. This lays stress on highlighting and defining the most significant attributes for evaluating customer's perception. Since, the people's perceptions are different and totally subjective, researcher tried to select those attributes which are relevant to most of the customers and can ultimately create competitive advantage for the companies.

Najdic (2011) assessed in detail the tourists' decision process regarding their holiday destination. Empirical Research was undertaken that combined the concepts; destination loyalty and psychology of the consumers in tourism, to find the relationships between them. Results of this study helped in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of management in tourism sector by focusing on perceptions and motivations that give better understanding on consumers' perspective.

Kim, Park and Schwarz (2010) undertook a research on how the consumer evaluates the product via considering their emotions. It is so because mostly the decisions are based on hedonic predictions – will it be good for me to do this? They detailed that products making emotional claims may focus on hedonic predictions on the experiences brought to mind by the product claims – will the product make me feel the way it promises? Therefore, marketers can facilitate the impression that the product will deliver on its promises i.e. matching the product's claims with those of consumers' preexisting feelings.

Hallem and Barth (2011) investigated on the dimensions of customer-perceived value in the context of medical tourism especially in context on use of internet. They raised a point that managers should not overlook the importance of internet in delivering medical tourism services as the patients are only able to see the doctor once they reach Tunisia for the treatment. The major objective of the research, as highlighted by researchers was to better understand the needs of medical tourists and thus better guide their choices and marketing decisions.

Nysveen, Methlie and Pedersen (2003) presented a report on the value added services offered by tourism websites and which of those are important for the customers. The variables under study included: Aggregation, Integration, Community, Search Engine, Personalization, Pricing and Trust. The results indicated that out of these seven variables; search engines, service integration and personalization are the most preferred by the customers. They agreed to that study of customer preferences are of vital significance for deriving satisfaction and long term association with website.

Lexhagen (2005) explained reasons for the online tourism industry's market slower than expected growth rate. The research work is oriented towards the consumer's perception about value added services in their purchase process. Researcher selected 18 variables related to contact, search engine, multimedia, links, community, map, FAQ, Languages, Booking, etc. The conceptual model developed included three phases: I-Search & Evaluation, II-Purchase

and III-Post Consumption. Customers perceived that most value added services should be a part of Phase I & II and least preference was given to phase III.

Shim et al. (2001) identified the importance of customer's intention to search the internet for product information. It is a key element for marketing researchers in predicting consumers' internet purchasing intentions. Results revealed that an intention to search internet for product information leads to an intention to purchase through the same medium; hence it should be considered important. It also exposed that intention to use internet for product information search acts as a central mechanism through which consumer characteristics affect higher-order decision making goals.

2.3 Consumer Trust & its Antecedents:

2.3.1 Consumer characteristics

Jarvenpaa et al. (1999) emphasized that trust plays a critical role in stimulating consumer purchases over the internet. He highlighted that culture may also affect the antecedents of consumer trust, i.e., consumers in different cultures might have differing expectations of what makes a web merchant trustworthy.

Gefen and Straub (2004) in their research work analyzed that when rules and customs are insufficient, people rely on trust and familiarity as primary mechanisms to reduce social uncertainty. The relative paucity of regulations and customs on the internet makes consumer familiarity and trust especially important in the case of e-commerce. Lack of an interpersonal exchange and one-time nature of typical business transaction on internet make this kind of consumer trust unique, because trust relates to other people and is nourished through interactions with them.

2.3.2 Website Characteristics

Sanghyun and Mi-Jin (2012) investigated the effects of various antecedents of trust in Social commerce namely: reputation, size, information quality and communication on consumers' trust. The results provide strong support for all these four variables thereby indicating their crucial role in building consumers' trust in the firm. Consumers depend on the s-commerce firms suggesting that online consumers understand that purchasing products or services online entail a higher level of risk than offline purchases because of the anonymity of the online environment. In a way, they try to avoid potential risks like fraud and no delivery.

Gregori and Daniele (2011) researched on identifying the key variables affecting consumer trust in tourism related affiliate websites. The findings revealed that there is a distinction between pivotal determinants of trust and trust enhancing factors. They suggested that affiliates should expose their competence and integrity to consumers by providing background information on their website in order to reduce consumer uncertainty.

Mcknight et al. (2002) worked on consumer trust in e-commerce. According to them, trust is a strategic imperative that strongly influences consumer intentions to transact with unfamiliar vendors via web. They laid emphasis on three behaviors that are critical to the realization of web-based vendor's strategic objectives namely: *following advice offered by web vendor, sharing personal information and purchasing from vendor's website.* They also worked on factors that help in building trust and include:

- *Structural Assurances:* Consumer perceptions of safety of web environment
- *Perceived Web Vendor reputation*
- *Perceived Website Quality*

Skadberg et al (2005) underwent an exploratory study about people's online experience while visiting a tourism website. The focus of the study was limited to examine how flow experience is related to the effectiveness of the website to stimulate visitors' interest in visiting the destination presented. The measurement variables included: *time distortion, Enjoyment, Learned more about the place, will enquire for more information, will return to the website and will visit the place.*

2.3.3 Service Quality

Ron (2011) in his study explored that the biggest problem faced by e-commerce owners is the trust deficit by visitors to the site. He emphasized on the fact that most of the website companies focus only on the product specifications and other technical details of the website but overlook the most important factor i.e. Trust for online purchasing. He identified five major reasons for visitor's reluctance namely: *No Brand Recognition, lack of documentation, no peer Reviews, certifications not displayed and Shabby Website Design.*

Chen and Dhillon (2003) confirmed that consumer trust in an internet vendor is an issue commanding more and more attention. They identified dimensions of trust namely: competence, integrity and benevolence. Competence refers to a company's ability to fulfill promises made with the consumers, Integrity suggests that company acts in a consistent,

reliable and honest manner and Benevolence is the ability of a company to hold consumer interests ahead of its own self-interest. The sources of trust identified include the characteristics of the consumer, the firm, website and interaction between consumer and the firm.

Grabner-Krauter and Kaluscha (2003) pinpointed that while trust involves uncertainty as well as dependency; online transactions are not only characterized by uncertainty, but also by anonymity, lack of control, making risk, etc. In short, buying on the internet presents numerous risks for consumers over and above the transaction process itself being perceived as risky. Since the online consumer cannot personally inspect products or services and does not even know what the retailer will do with the personal information that is collected during the shopping process.

Chen and Barnes (2007) investigated on online trust as one of the key obstacles to vendors succeeding on the internet medium. They declared that perceived usefulness, perceived security, perceived privacy, perceived good reputation and willingness to customize are the important antecedents to online initial trust. As per the research, both online initial trust and familiarity with online purchasing have a positive impact on purchase intention.

Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004) in their research work proposed the importance of e-service quality for online purchases and loyalty. They concluded that e-service quality (e-SQ) is a crucial factor that can significantly determine customer satisfaction, purchase, loyalty and retention through a website. They highlighted thirteen major variable dimensions to measure e-SQ namely: *Information fit to task, interactivity, trust, responsiveness, Design Appeal, Intuitiveness, Visual Appeal, Innovativeness, Flow-Emotional Appeal, Integrated Communication, Business Process And Viable Substitute*.

2.4 Consumer Trust & Purchase Intention

Huh and Shin (2009) underwent a study in exploring consumer trust in DTC websites and concluded with a positive relationship between consumer trust and consumers' intention to visit or revisit DTC website.

Flavian et al (2006) determined the influence that perceived usability has on the user's loyalty to websites that they visit. The results of the study confirmed that the trust of the user increases when the user perceived that the system was usable and that there was a consequent increase in the degree of website loyalty. Furthermore, greater usability also had a positive

influence on user satisfaction and greater website loyalty. Also, user trust was partially dependent on the degree of consumer website satisfaction.

Bauernfeind and Zins (2006) focused on online experiences and their consequences for future use while emphasizing on recommender systems. They concluded that trust is the most important factor in order to achieve a high degree of website satisfaction which further raises the loyalty levels as well as recommendation for others. Every website and travel information provider has to face the challenge of trust building individually and cannot rely on the improved general internet penetration and level of familiarity. Dimensions of internet purchase attitudes include: *risk reduction, flexibility, convenience and trendiness.*

Brown et al. (2007) raised an increasing consumer's privacy concern due to increasing usage of ICTs to facilitate relations with consumers. Research indicates that this can have an adverse impact on the consumer's willingness to purchase online. Three aspects that have received attention from researchers are: *unauthorized secondary use of data, invasion of privacy and errors.* The research revealed that although the consumers are concerned with the aspect of privacy, it did not have any direct bearing on their propensity to purchase from travel websites.

Wen (2010) tested a structural equation model to explore the impact of quality of website design, traveler's intentions and travelers' trust on their online purchase intention of travel products. The study revealed that when consumers evaluate a website design, they consider information quality, system quality and service quality as the most important factors. The findings also confirmed that *quality of website design, consumer's search intention and consumers' trust* influence their online purchase intention.

Heskett (2008) developed service profit chain which stresses that profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty. Loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction which is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers. Hence, service provision to customers generates satisfaction and loyalty with an increasing number of repeat purchases. Most of the companies have found that their most loyal customers – the top 20% of total customers – not only provide all of the profit, but also cover losses incurred in dealing with less loyal customers.

Lertwarinawit and Gulid (2011) promoted that there are significant positive relationships between service quality and value, satisfaction and brand trust. They also highlighted positive

relationships between behavioral loyalty and value, satisfaction and brand trust. The research revolved around 400 international tourists and the results were analyzed by applying Structural Equation Analysis. One of the significant results was that nationality has no moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and value, satisfaction and brand trust.

Walsh, Lynch and Harrington (2011) were of the opinion that a tourism firm's long-term survival relies more on overall firm-level innovativeness. They distinguished between innovation and innovativeness by concluding that innovation merely provides a firm with a short-term competitive advantage as it can be easily copied by competitors. But, on the other hand, innovativeness is an underlying capability structure which is strategically developed through organizational path dependencies to encourage such behavior at firm's level. They defined innovative behavior as change in behavior by tourism firms in response to environmental market changes.

Phelan (2011) examined website heuristics and their influence on the likelihood to purchase. Results of this study indicated that booking decisions are positively related to website's aesthetic appeal. Results showed four variables: pictures, ease of use, neatness/ uncluttered and plain/ boring, were most significant on both site appeal and site influence. This research would have helped the hotels in better accommodating the customers and realize the greatest return on investment.

Bedi and Banati (2006) highlighted the trend of increased web usage in travel and tourism industry. Their research focused on how to attract and retain the users through user friendly and trustworthy websites. The relationship between user trust and usability of a website is scrutinized by analyzing three airline websites. The variables undertaken in this study include: color combination, page scrolling, link names, link explanation, search facility, online booking, seat availability and customization. They concluded that use will lead to greater user satisfaction and finally increased intention to use.

Chen (2006) developed a model representing the determinants of consumer trust in an online travel site. He underwent an empirical analysis and identified 6 factors including website's reputation, characteristics, service quality, consumer's education level, perception of risk associated with online shopping and consumer's overall satisfaction level with the site that have an influence on consumer's overall trust in an online travel website.

Swan et al. (1988) investigated on the conceptualization of trust in an industrial sales setting. Trust components approach to the measurement of trust was used to identify the relevant dimensions that a salesperson could develop to be considered "trustworthy" by the buyer. They concluded that overall trust is significantly related to the assumed trust components – dependable, reliable, honest, responsible and likeable. They pinpointed that trust is an integral part of the industrial selling process.

Cazier et al. (2007) explored the contribution of value congruence to the formation of trust in e-business. The results indicate that value congruence not only plays a role in mediating the trust of consumers for the organizations, but it also has a strong effect on determining their willingness to disclose personal information.

Lauer and Deng (2007) stressed on online trust as a key differentiator that determines the success or failure of many online companies. Trusted websites can provide customers with a secure and private online shopping experience. And at the same time could alleviate customers' concerns about the leakage, unauthorized collection, or the misuse of their private information, promote deep customer loyalty and help the companies build a positive relationship with their customers while increasing their market share and profits.

Previous studies highlight the increasing importance of digitization of tourism industry thereby leading to the sector's growth. But, the growth of this digitization is different in different economies. The variability in its acceptability is also significant because of the varying cultures and trust levels. Hence, this study will be undertaken to study the dimensions of consumer trust on online tourism companies in India. The major objective of this study revolves around the inhibiting factors that reduce the level of trust in the minds of Indian consumers while using online tourism companies. It will also study factors that build trust and affect consumers' purchasing intentions positively.

3. Objective of the Study.

The objective of the study is to discover the factors responsible for building trust in e-tourism (online tourism) companies by Indian consumers. In this study; tourists' perceptions, preferences and expectations from e-tourism companies will be identified to meet and exceed their demand. The study revolves around these variables for domestic (Indian) tourists undertaking leisure tourism. The study incorporates some of the specific objectives:

1. To study the companies' perspective about online buying behavior.
2. To study tourist characteristics that affects trust in e-tourism (online tourism) companies.
3. To identify the factors responsible for generating trust in tourists.
4. To study the reasons for selection of e-tourism by consumers and recognizing their expectations from the companies.
5. To discover the factors responsible for tourist satisfaction and loyalty.
6. To develop a theoretical model of antecedents of consumer trust in online tourism companies.

4. Proposed Methodology

4.1 Research Question:

The first research question states that, ***"Which factors are responsible for creating trust in online tourism companies?"*** Hence, this research study is explanatory in nature as it is going to find out the relationship between determinants of trust and e-tourism companies' performance. Moreover, it is going to be investigated that how much each factor was successful in generating e-tourism trust and then finally generating tourist loyalty and retention.

4.2 Broader Hypothesis of the study:

To accomplish the objectives of the study, the following hypothesis have been developed for empirical testing:

H.1 A consumer's individual characteristics significantly influence his or her overall trust in e-tourism company.

H.2 The characteristics of e-tourism website significantly influence a consumer's overall trust in the site.

H.3 Service Quality Provision in e-tourism website significantly influences a consumer's overall trust in the site.

H.4 Tourist's trust in e-tourism website significantly influences a consumer's satisfaction and loyalty in the site.

4.3 Research Strategy:

In this study, Survey Method will be considered for collecting and analyzing diverse opinions of varied tourists. Moreover, data will also be supported by Literature review of previous researches undertaken.

4.4 Sample Selection:

Samples will be selected via Non Probability Sampling (Judgement) based on the judgment of the surveyor. Certain considerations were taken care of while selecting the sample:

- Respondents should be aware of English to certain extent and should have planned for a tour for minimum of three days at least once.

4.5 Sample Size:

The sample size of 400 respondents will be selected from Delhi NCR.

4.6 Sampling Unit:

The urban consumers planning for tours via e-tourism companies are the primary unit of analysis.

4.7 Data Collection:

Primary data will be the main source of data collection via structured questionnaire.

4.8 Statistical Tools:

Measures used in this study have been taken from a number of sources. Some well-established items have been borrowed directly from the literature, whereas the others were new items developed while considering its applicability to e-commerce, online shopping and online travel site. For analyzing ***Principle Component Factor Analysis*** will be performed to reduce items and obtain composite scores for constructs with multiple items for the subsequent use in ***Multiple Regression Analysis***

4.9 Limitation of the Study:

All efforts will be undertaken to ensure that the research is designed and conducted to optimize the ability to achieve the research objective. However, there are some constraints for undertaking this research.

1. The study is restricted to Delhi NCR only.
2. Individuals who travel for any other reason besides Leisure (Like Business, Medical Purpose, Education, etc) are not considered as respondents.
3. Response of the tourists will be subjective and hence generalization will not be totally true.

4.10 Scope of Study:

Researchers have been studying consumer behavior perspectives of e-tourism in terms of how they make choice in destination selection. While some researchers pinpointed on behavior

aspect, the others focused on satisfaction level of the tourists. The scope of this study is limited to the factors responsible for creating trust. This study will be helpful for the emerging online tourism companies to understand tourists' perceptions, preferences and expectations from them in order to meet and exceed their demand. Since, the study revolves around domestic (Indian) tourists undertaking leisure tourism; better understanding of them will increase the revenue of the Indian Tourism Industry.

5. References

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